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RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 3525
RUEHRA/AMEMBASSY RIGA PRIORITY 1739
RUEHVL/AMEMBASSY VILNIUS PRIORITY 3751
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW PRIORITY 3391
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RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY

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SUBJECT: BELARUSIAN SECURITY FORCES SEARCH APARTMENT OF
LATVIAN DIPLOMAT

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Constance Phlipot for Reasons 1.4 B and
D

¶1. (C) The Latvian Embassy on July 25 released a press statement protesting the July 25 search of a Latvian diplomat's residence by Belarusian security forces. On July 26, Latvian DCM Juris Poikans confirmed with Pol/Econ Chief that at 3am on July 25 three "unidentified Belarusians in plain clothes," a uniformed police officer, and a cameraman entered the apartment of the Latvian Embassy's press relations officer when he was in the process of locking the door of the apartment from inside. (Note: Poikans noted that the diplomat, who was ready to go to bed, was having trouble with one of the locks of his front door and when he unlocked both locks to determine the problem, the law enforcement authorities pushed open the door and entered the apartment.)

¶2. (C) Once in the apartment, the cameramen began to film the diplomat and his belongings but left the apartment upon the insistence of the diplomat. Poikans explained the security forces immediately began to search the apartment for videotapes, which the diplomat claimed contained only footage of Belarusian state media programs. Poikans said he could not fully vouch for the content of the videotapes, but he speculated that the security forces could have easily entered the diplomat's house earlier and planted embarrassing videotapes. The security forces asked the diplomat if there were other tapes in the apartment, and when the diplomat refused to answer, the uniformed policeman prepared a formal protocol of the search and everyone left the apartment with the videotapes in hand. The search and confiscation lasted 15 minutes.

¶3. (C) Poikans noted his government is "completely vexed and confused" about the motivations for such a blatant violation of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The Latvian Embassy has lodged a formal complaint with the Belarusian MFA, and the Latvian MFA in Riga has called in the Belarusian Charge d'affairs to stress that the "development of bilateral relations depends on the GOB's handling of this situation." The Belarusian MFA and Ministry of Interior have acknowledged the incident and indicated they are looking into the matter.

¶4. (C) Poikans speculated that perhaps someone in the GOB wanted to prevent Belarus, Lithuania, and Latvia from holding a possible "high-level" trilateral meeting in September to celebrate the formal demarcation of the Belarus-Latvian border. The Latvian DCM explained there was some talk in the

three respective capitals that the completion of border demarcation negotiations merited a meeting at the prime minister level, but the illegal search and seizure has likely forced the Latvians to cancel such a meeting. Poikans stressed, however, that he does not understand why the GOB would commit such an egregious act.
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